Introduction to the NPower Network

Who is NPower?

NPower is a network of independent, locally based nonprofits dedicated to one thing: putting technology know-how in the hands of nonprofits. Why do we do this? Because we know that every day, nonprofit organizations perform some of society's most critical work, and that information technology can transform how nonprofits serve their communities. How do we do this? With a passion for nonprofits and an understanding of their unique environment, we are providing appropriate, affordable, and empowering technology assistance every day in communities across the country.

Imagine a world in which technology transforms people's lives...

Where databases help food banks move larger quantities of food off shelves and into hungry communities. Where online technology labs put refugee women in touch with critical community resources in their native language. Where advocates for social justice reach a broad and diverse audience through a web site – and instantly are able to engage people in civic participation.

Technology doesn't change the world – people do.

Dedicated, creative staff and volunteers working at nonprofit organizations daily stretch the limits of what they believe they can accomplish. At NPower, we believe passionately in these people and organizations, yet we know that many of America's 1.6 million nonprofits still struggle to identify the appropriate role for technology in their organizations. NPower is the trusted partner who helps them overcome technology as a hurdle, and instead embrace it as an ally.

NPower's History

Five years ago in Seattle, Washington, a group of visionary corporations and foundations imagined the increased impact nonprofits could have if they were able to break down the barriers of cost and know-how that hinder the use of technology as a mission-tool. In the spirit of venture philanthropy, they invested time, talent and financial resources to launch NPower, a nonprofit with a mission to help other nonprofits use technology to better serve communities.

In 1999, NPower began delivering a full spectrum of technology help for nonprofits in Puget Sound: classroom training, strategic technology planning, technology implementation, and web-delivered services. NPower services are targeted to address the unique opportunities and challenges faced by small to mid-sized nonprofits, and are kept financially accessible through philanthropic underwriting. Within three years, in the Seattle area alone, NPower delivered over 20,000 hours of hands-on technology help and over 30,000 hours of classroom training to more than 600 nonprofit organizations.

We realized that other communities were searching for ways to do something similar. In response to this need, in 2000 NPower partnered with Microsoft Corporation to develop up to twelve NPower programs around the country – and the NPower Network was born. In addition to the many community funders who support local NPower affiliates, our national funding partners include the Omidyar Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, C. S. Mott Foundation, SBC Foundation, Surdna Foundation, David & Lucile Packard Foundation, NCDI Living Cities, the Verizon Foundation, Changepoint Corporation and McKinsey & Company.

Who makes up the NPower Network?

Every community has unique needs and assets, so the face of NPower looks a little different around the country. However, NPower always helps nonprofits understand how technology can support their missions, and provides implementation services to ensure nonprofits can put their ideas into action. Some NPower affiliates are stand-alone organizations, and some are programs within broader organizations. Currently the NPower federation consists of twelve affiliates:

- Arizona – NPower Arizona
- Atlanta – TechBridge, an NPower Program
- Colorado – NPower Colorado, a program of Community Resource Center
- Indiana – NPower Indiana
- Los Angeles – NPower LA, a program of the Center for Nonprofit Management
- Michigan – NPower Michigan
- New York City – NPower NY
- North and South Carolina – NPower Charlotte Region
- Pennsylvania – NPower Pennsylvania
- Oregon – NPower Oregon, a program of TACS
- Washington D.C. – NPower DC (formerly Technology Works for Good)
- Washington State – NPower Seattle

In addition, we work with local organizations in communities around the country where no NPower exists. These local partners don't share the NPower name, but they do share our values and philosophy. We jointly agree to provide targeted technology services to the local nonprofit community, and NPower equips the local partners with tools and know-how to continue offering services.

The NPower Network puts technology know-how directly into the hands of nonprofits in over 50 communities, through education and training, volunteer matching and service events, hands-on technology help, and innovations in service delivery, both on-land and online. We continue to assist with rigorous assessment and planning in communities interested in starting a local NPower program.

Binding the Network together is a set of simple yet powerful values:

- We are mission-driven and passionate about the work of nonprofits.
- We are committed to providing services of the highest quality, and to measuring and understanding the impact of our work.
- We believe innovation and service delivery happen best at the local level.
- Knowledge sharing defines and differentiates NPower. We can achieve our vision only through open, intentional sharing of ideas and solutions.

The role of NPower National

NPower National exists to steward and grow the NPower Network, and to directly empower nonprofits with technology. We do this by:

- seeding and nourishing high-quality, community-based technology assistance, directly with nonprofits and through local partnerships;
- building an unprecedented knowledge-sharing network;
- creating and supporting high-impact web tools; and
- measuring and understanding the impact of our work.

NPower's Impact

As part of our commitment to measuring impact, we build evaluation into every aspect of our work, and share our lessons learned across with NPower Network and with our funding partners.

Did you know...?

- From inception through September 2003, local NPowers collectively delivered over **57,000** hours of consulting, taught over **11,000** students, and completed more than **2,300** volunteer matches.
- Since their creation, NPower web tools such as TechAtlas have been accessed by over **6,800** nonprofits.
- From January to September 2003 alone, NPowers served over **3,200** organizations through training and hands-on help.

What does success look like? Our true success is measured by the people whose lives are transformed because our clients could do their work more effectively.

- In Washington, members of a center for the deaf and hard of hearing have access to new video conferencing technology that enables them to communicate more naturally via phone calls in sign language rather than relying on relay services, TTY or interpreters.
- The family of an adopted child was connected to a needed child therapist within three days, rather than weeks, because a small adoption agency in Indianapolis had a new database and email capabilities.
- Uninsured families in Oregon continued to receive health care services, despite the fact that their nonprofit provider had been hit by a computer virus that crashed their system -- they were back up and running within hours after calling NPower.
- Parents have better contact with resources to help them get ahead now that a family service center in Detroit has a new database to better track and integrate its GED, parenting and job search programs.

Learn more at www.NPower.org